

IN THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

(Claim 14 has been amended.)

1. (Previously presented) A computer implemented method for providing on-line appointment services over a global computer network, said method comprising:

registering service providers for on-line appointments over the global computer network, said registering providing appointment availability information for the registered service providers;

requesting an on-line appointment between a user and one of the registered service providers over the global computer network based on the availability information;

sending an electronic notification message to the associated one of the registered service providers informing the registered service provider that an on-line appointment has been requested with them;

receiving a confirmation or a decline decision for the on-line appointment being requested from the registered service provider; and

electronically notifying the user requesting the on-line appointment of the confirmation or decline via email,

wherein the on-line appointment services are available to at least one non-registered service provider on a limited basis, which can motivate the non-registered service provider to become a registered service provider, and

wherein said method is managed by another entity, with the another entity being independent of the service providers and the user.

2. (Original) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said method further comprises:

subsequent to said receiving of the confirmation of the on-line appointment, receiving a cancellation decision for the on-line appointment from the registered service provider and then electronically notifying the user that the previously requested and confirmed on-line appointment has been cancelled via email.

3. (Original) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said method further comprises:

providing an on-line directory of service providers.

4. (Original) A method as recited in claim 3, wherein said method further comprises:

providing a search facility that users can search for a particular service provider by searching through the on-line directory,

wherein once the particular service provider is found using the search facility, said scheduling of an on-line appointment between a user and the particular service provider over the global computer network.

5. (Original) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said registering of the service providers over the global computer network identifies at least offered services, available appointment times, contact information for the registered service providers.

6. (Original) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said method further comprises:

registering users for on-line calendars over the global computer network.

7. (Original) A method as recited in claim 6,

wherein said method further comprises providing an on-line calendar for each of the registered users and the registered service providers, and

wherein said scheduling of the on-line appointments includes placing appointment indications on the on-line calendars of the associated ones of the registered service providers and the users.

8. (Previously presented) A method for providing an on-line appointment between a user and a service provider over a network, said method comprising:

(a) receiving a request for appointment availability of the service provider during a time period;

(b) determining available appointment times within the time period for the service provider;

(c) transmitting the available appointment times to the user;

(d) receiving a selected appointment time from the available appointment times;

(e) requesting the on-line appointment between the user and the service provider at the selected appointment time; and

(f) sending an electronic notification message to the service provider informing the service provider that the on-line appointment has been requested with the service provider at the selected appointment time,

wherein said method is managed by another entity, with the another entity being independent of the service provider and the user,

wherein the service provider is either a registered service provider or a non-registered service provider for scheduling of on-line appointments over the network, and

wherein a user is able to schedule with a non-registered service provider the on-line appointment over the network on a limited basis, which can motivate the non-registered service provider to become a registered service provider.

9. (Original) A method as recited in claim 8, wherein said method further comprises:

(g) receiving a confirmation or a decline decision from the service provider for the on-line appointment that has been requested.

10. (Original) A method as recited in claim 9, wherein said method further comprises:

(h) sending a notification message to the user requesting the on-line appointment informing the user of the confirmation or decline decision by the service provider.

11. (Original) A method as recited in claim 10,

wherein said receiving (a) of the request for appointment availability includes a time duration for the on-line appointment, and

wherein said determining (b) of the available appointment times are those times during the time period that the service provider is available for at least the time duration.

12. (Original) A method as recited in claim 9, wherein said method further comprises:

(h) updating the requested on-line appointment to a confirmed on-line appointment after the confirmation decision has been received.

13. (Original) A method as recited in claim 8, wherein said method further comprises:

(g) subsequently rendering the selected appointment time for the service provider unavailable.

14. (Currently Amended) A method for providing an on-line appointment over a network, said method comprising:

(a) transmitting a user's electronic calendar to a user;

(b) transmitting a list of available service providers to the user;

(c) receiving a request for appointment availability of a selected one of the available service providers;

(d) determining available time slots for the selected one of the available service providers;

(e) transmitting the available time slots to the user;

(f) receiving a time slot selection from the available time slots to establish an appointment with the selected one of the available service providers;

(g) updating the user's electronic calendar with the appointment;

(h) updating an electronic calendar for the selected one of the available service providers with the appointment; and

(i) sending an electronic notification message to the selected one of the available service providers informing the service provider that the appointment has been requested with them at the time slot selected,

wherein said method further comprising

registering the service providers; and

storing, prior to accepting appointments for a service provider,

appointment availability information regarding when the registered service providers in a database of service providers make their services available to allow the user to schedule an on-line appointment over the network,

~~wherein said method is managed by another entity, with the another entity being independent of the service providers and the user,~~

~~wherein the service providers are registered service providers for the on-line appointment over the network,~~

wherein the on-line appointment with a non-registered service provider is able to ~~schedule with a~~ be scheduled with by a user ~~the on-line appointment~~ over the network on a limited basis, which can motivate the non-registered service provider to become a registered service provider.

15. (Original) A method as recited in claim 14, wherein said updating (g) and (h) indicates the appointment on the electronic calendars of the user and the selected one of the available service providers as pending.

16. (Original) A method as recited in claim 14, wherein said method further comprises:

(j) receiving a confirmation or a decline decision from the selected one of the available service providers for the appointment that has been requested.

17. (Original) A method as recited in claim 16, wherein said method further comprises:

(k) updating the user's electronic calendar and the electronic calendar for the selected one of the available service providers to reflect the confirmation or decline decision by the service provider.

18. (Original) A method as recited in claim 17, wherein said method further comprises:

(l) sending a notification message to the user requesting the appointment informing the user of the confirmation or decline decision by the service provider.

19. (Original) A method as recited in claim 18,

wherein said updating (g) and (h) indicates the appointment on the electronic calendars of the user and the selected one of the available service providers as pending, and

wherein said updating (k) indicates the appointment on the electronic calendars of the user and the selected one of the available service providers as confirmed when said receiving (j) receives the confirmation decision.

20. (Original) A method as recited in claim 18,

wherein said updating (g) and (h) indicates the appointment on the electronic calendars of the user and the selected one of the available service providers as pending, and

wherein said updating (k) removes the indication of the appointment from the electronic calendars of the user and the selected one of the available service providers when said receiving (j) receives the decline decision.

21. (Previously presented) An on-line appointment system, comprising:

an appointment server coupled to the Internet, said appointment server manages registering of service providers as well as scheduling of appointments between requestors and service providers; and

an appointment database coupled to said appointment server, said appointment database stores on-line calendars for the service providers and the requestors that have registered with said appointment server, the on-line calendars also including appointment indications for the appointments scheduled with said appointment server, said appointment database also stores a directory of service providers with appointment availability information of the service providers, with whom appointment can be scheduled,

wherein said system is managed by another entity, with the another entity being independent of the service providers and the requestors,

wherein the directory of service providers includes not only those of the service providers that have registered with said appointment server but also a plurality of service providers that have not yet registered with said appointment server, and

wherein at least one of the not-yet registered service providers is allowed appointment scheduling using said appointment server on a limited basis, which can motivate the not-yet registered service provider to become a registered service provider.

22. (Cancelled).

23. (Previously presented) An on-line appointment system as recited in claim 21, wherein the directory can be populated with the plurality of service providers that have not yet registered with said appointment server by populating the directory with basic information on the service providers.

24. (Original) An on-line appointment system as recited in claim 23, wherein the basic information includes at least a business name and a facsimile number or an email address.

25. (Original) An on-line appointment system as recited in claim 24, wherein said appointment server issues notifications to the service providers regarding the appointments that have been scheduled.

26. (Original) An on-line appointment system as recited in claim 25, wherein said wherein the notifications inform the service providers of requested appointment or cancelled appointments.

27. (Original) An on-line appointment system as recited in claim 26,

wherein the directory includes detailed information on the service providers that have registered with said appointment server, the detailed information including at least a business name and an email address, and

wherein the notifications are sent to the service providers via their email addresses.

28. (Original) An on-line appointment system as recited in claim 27, wherein when one of the service providers to receive a notification has not previously registered with said appointment server, the notification is transmitted to the one of the service providers via the facsimile number for the one of the service providers in the directory.

29. (Original) An on-line appointment system as recited in claim 28, wherein the directory is provided by a database.